

Letters to the Editor

"Truman and the CIA"

I emphatically disagree with your editorial of Dec. 28 and I regretfully take issue with President Truman's statement on intelligence operations.

Mr. Truman set up the CIA within the framework of the National Security Act of 1947. This Act, in addition to other responsibilities, charges the agency "to perform, for the benefit of the existing intelligence agencies, such additional services of common concern as the National Security Council determines can be more efficiently accomplished centrally" and "to perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

I presume that everybody interested in the problem, President Truman included, knew what these vague paragraphs meant, namely, an authorization of operational activities without which no intelligence agency worth its salt can function. The NSC, as far as is known, never objected to these activities. That is as it should be, for the NSC is a guardian not of morality but of national survival.

Intelligence consists of analytical and operational functions. CIA is responsible for pulling together all available information in order to come up with coordinated intelligence estimates. While it is true that nearly 90 per cent of information is gleaned from overt sources, there remain vital areas to be explored, and it is the task of operators—call them spies if you will—to discover these secrets.

As to subversion, it covers not only ideological infiltration and sabotage but insurgency and guerrilla warfare. Your writer's noble principle, if carried out, would expose our flanks to attacks against which we are virtually helpless. I am certain that this was not his intention. Who in the Government is responsible for countering such dangerous tactics, I neither care nor want to know. I presume that both the Defense Department and CIA have legitimate responsibilities in accordance with the National Security Act. As to President Truman's puzzling statement, he must have known, between 1947 and 1952, in what direction CIA developed. So must his successors, who in actual fact expressly endorsed certain of these activities.

There is too much talk about CIA. It is not a topic for public discussion. Search British, French or other countries' newspapers for gossip regarding their intelligence services: you will find intelligence agency worth its salt next to nothing. Thus I feel that President Truman's statement should have been underplayed and not again brought to public attention by an editorial.

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